The Festival of Lights: Writing About Hanukkah

Success criteria (tick when done)

[ ] I have used capital letters and full stops correctly.
[ ] I have used at least two words from the word bank.
[ ] I have explained why the oil was a miracle.
[ ] I have described the menorah clearly.
[ ] My writing is neat and easy to read.

What to expect at this age

Year 3 pupils should be able to write simple and compound sentences. They are beginning to use conjunctions like 'because' and 'although' to link their ideas.

Good, better, best: model responses

Good: Hanukkah is a special celebration because it is the Festival of Lights. Long ago, a small amount of oil lasted for eight days, which was a miracle because it should have run out. During the festival, families light the menorah, which is a candle holder with nine branches. Families often eat delicious foods fried in oil, such as latkes. Hanukkah is a time for families to be together.

The child has followed the instructions and used the sentence starters correctly.

Better: Hanukkah is a special celebration because it remembers a miracle. Long ago, a small amount of oil lasted for eight days, which was a miracle because it was only enough for one day. During the festival, families light the menorah, which is a special nine-branched candle holder. Additionally, families eat delicious foods fried in oil, such as potato latkes. Hanukkah is a time for families to share stories and celebrate.

The child has added more detail, such as 'potato latkes', and used a word from the word bank ('Additionally').

Best: Hanukkah is a special celebration because it is the joyful Festival of Lights. Long ago, a small amount of oil lasted for eight days, which was a miracle because it should have run out quickly. During the festival, families light the menorah, which is a beautiful nine-branched candle holder. Furthermore, families eat delicious foods fried in oil, such as crispy latkes. Hanukkah is a time for families to reflect on the past and enjoy time together.

The child uses descriptive adjectives ('joyful', 'beautiful', 'crispy') and a wider range of vocabulary to make the writing flow.

What a secure answer looks like

Encourage pupils to focus on the structure of their explanation. Remind them that a good explanation uses clear, factual language.

If your child is stuck

Ask your child to tell you the story of the oil out loud first. Once they have said it, ask them to write down exactly what they just told you.

Common mistakes to watch for

Children often forget to explain the 'why' behind the miracle. Encourage them to re-read their work to ensure they have explained that the oil was only meant to last for one day.